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Japan

Mori Calliope
森カリオペ

Special Edition

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V Tuber × Rapper × Reaper

クリエイティブの源泉



RollingStone Japan
— Front —
Cover Story



VTuber×Rapper×Reaper

クリエイティブの源泉

Mori Calliope is a new generation star, full of talent and humor. She started her career as a VTuber in the English-speaking VTuber group hololive English under the VTuber agency, hololive production. She creates music by mixing English and Japanese to produce fluent and skillful raps. As of March 2022, the number of subscribers to her YouTube channel exceeded 2 million.

Her first full-length album UnAlive, in March 2022, ranked No. 1 on the album charts of iTunes and the online music store called “Mora” operated by Sony Music Solutions. On April 4, 2022, her major-label debut was announced by EMI Records - Universal Music, and her first EP, SHINIGAMI NOTE, will be released on July 20, 2022. They also announced that her first solo concert, titled Mori Calliope Major Debut Concert “New Underworld Order,” will be held at Toyosu PIT in Tokyo on July 21, 2022, to celebrate her major-label debut.

In this long interview, we display her creative background and the philosophy behind her activities, which showcase her diverse talents.

Interview = Hiroo Nishizawa
Text = Aya Miyahara

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INTERVIEW



RSJ How did you get into the VTuber scene? Can you tell us the sequence of becoming a VTuber?

Calliope First, I saw many clips on YouTube of VTubers like Inugami Korone and Natsuiro Matsuri from hololive. I wondered, "What is this?" and my friends from the underground rap scene became VTubers as well. So, I wanted to know more about VTubers, and I was interested in them. And then, my friends sent the audition for hololive English on our Discord channel, so I applied for it and showed them my music work. I think they liked my music, sense of humor, and personality. And then, they hired me to join hololive English which was a dream come true for me, so yeah, I'm really enjoying being a VTuber very much now.

RSJ Even though there are some VTuber management offices, what does hololive production mean to you?

Calliope Let's see, hololive production is like a big family, I think. There aren't too many of us, so we can still all know about each other decently. Maybe not everyone is best friends with each other, but we still support each other. And it feels like I can speak easily to anyone in hololive production because we all are working together and there's a great feeling of being like comrades, like very good co-workers who are caring, supporting, and willing to see each other's dreams come true. So yeah, we all are very friendly to each other, chasing our own dreams. I think hololive production is a great agency to offer many wonderful opportunities to aspiring VTubers and the members of hololive production. We

all care very much about each other.

RSJ You mentioned the underground rap scene, so may I ask about your cultural influences besides Japanese culture and otherwise?

Calliope I'm really interested in animation, illustration, and things like that. Because of those interests, I discovered Japanese music on YouTube from the Japanese internet rap scene which seemed like a hidden treasure to me... I was really interested in the so-called Japanese net rap that came from niconico, to which most Japanese net rappers were uploading their music at that time. In the late 2000s and early 2010s, it was very popular. And many great musicians came from the Japanese internet rap scene. So I also became very interested, and that has probably influenced most of my music tastes. I do enjoy American rap music as well.

RSJ Besides rap music, how about other cultural influences, such as anime or movies?

Calliope For animation, I really like GAINAX and the studio that came from it, Studio Trigger. I like really crazy Sakuga Animation with a lot of action. I think that kind of comes out in my personality and my rap style. I like really insane art, situations, and animation that is just so crazy. For movies too, I like the same kind. If it's not animated, then maybe... I'm actually a big fan of Prison Break and Prison Break genre of movies and TV shows, for example, Escape from Alcatraz or The Shawshank Redemption. I really like prison movies. I'm not sure how that translates to my music,

but I know that animation and the movies have had an influence on my music. I think some of the stories that I tell in my music can be related to them in terms of like, I think it's really important to find your way out of your own mental prisons. And a lot of my songs deal with finding personal battles and personal mental blocks and emotions.

RSJ So interesting! In connection with your previous answer, what do you keep in mind when you write lyrics?

Calliope When I write lyrics, I want to write songs that are relatable to myself but also to the listeners. I think about my own mental struggles and my mental prisons. I write songs that other people feeling the same things can listen to and enjoy. Maybe I deal with some issues like being anxious all the time or being worried about the future. But I try to make my songs very general, not too specific to me, the general sort I can connect with other people who listen to my music, and we can all share our feelings of understanding each other.

RSJ You write lyrics by blending English and Japanese. How did you come up with this style?

Calliope I didn't speak any Japanese when I started listening to Japanese music. But, over time, as I made more Japanese friends, I started talking to them on Twitter, and they taught me Japanese, and I started learning more from Japanese music and putting more Japanese words and phrases slowly into my music. And over time, I entered the underground scene, and I realized that I had to start putting more Japanese into my music. Because Japanese fans couldn't connect very well to only English songs that I sing for them. So, I started using Japanese more and more, and now it's very normal for me to at least include a little bit of Japanese in every song so that Japanese listeners can at least find a word or a phrase to understand and maybe understand what that song is about.

RSJ Introduce your environment in music production and which software you usually use. And how did you learn them?

Calliope I have my own home studio that I was using very often before I joined Universal Music. Now I go to the professional

studio provided by them to record. But before then, I did everything by myself and with my own engineer. At that time, I was using a MANLEY microphone. It's very expensive, but my voice sounds extremely clear and as good as studio-quality when I record through it. And I use what is called the RME Babyface Pro interface. And, for my Digital Audio Workstation, I use Cubase for recording because my music producer friends had always recommended it to me and they use it too, so I started to learn it. I can't produce music in Cubase, but I use it for recording vocals and organizing my vocals to send to the mixing engineer to make the sound actually... be good, I guess. I do all my own recording and selection processes by myself with Cubase.

RSJ In your debut live stream, you launched an original song, "Excuse My Rudeness, But Could You Please RIP?" Can you tell us the circumstances of how you made that song?

Calliope The original name of that song was "Shitsurei Shimasuga Shinde Kudasai," but COVER Corp. said, "No, you can't call it that!" because the Japanese kanji for death is too strong, so we changed it to "RIP" instead of "Shinde Kudasai." This was an idea for a song I had before I became the artist named Mori Calliope and I was just The Grim Reaper. I think people were shocked and didn't know what it was about just from the title. But, I worked with an artist I respected from my earlier time of being interested in niconico rap and niconico music. His name is K's kokorobeats (kokorobeats, a.k.a K's/Coro), and he made the track for that. We didn't expect it to become so popular because hololive English was suddenly becoming very popular. Many people listen to that song because I think they were interested in the group. The reason why I made that song is that I saw that so many idols gave a very strong impression when they had their debut songs. Making one song did not take too much time for me, so before I debuted, I thought, "Well, I just make an entire EP including that song." I thought it would make a strong impression on my viewers, so they could see how hard I try. I tried very hard!

RSJ It may not be easy to answer

since you already have made a lot of songs. Please choose three songs which represent you and tell us the reason why you chose them.

Calliope Oh wow! That's really a tough question, but I think I can choose three. I would think about my past, present, and future when I choose these songs. For my past, I would choose "end of a life" because it's about my past in the underground rap scene and sort of leaving that life and continuing as me, Mori Calliope, that everyone knows now. My present would be "The Grim Reaper is a Live-Streamer," which is my theme song about my life. The title is literally "The Grim Reaper is a Live-Streamer," which is what I'm doing. I'm a live streamer. It just talks about my daily life as a streamer, but it's also very catchy. And for my future, that's very tough, but I think maybe I would choose a song from the EP, SHINIGAMI NOTE... I'm not sure how much I can talk about it because it has not been released yet, so I won't tell you the title of that song. But there is a song about sort of taking over the world and maybe ending the world also. That's kind of crazy, but it's more about just my new vibes and feeling for the future, and maybe starting my own new world order, new underworld order, and sort of giving 100% to being Mori Calliope that the whole world can see and look up to and whose music they can enjoy.

RSJ You have done a lot of collaboration songs as well. Which collab songs are especially impressive to you?

Calliope The ones that I think about often as my best work are collaborations with my genmate, Gawr Gura from hololive English. She's also an amazing singer. It's my dream to someday make a song with every member of hololive English. So, with Gura, we made a song called "Q." What does "Q" stand for is... well, it's a secret! You have to decide for yourself. "Q" has an animated music video. I asked someone who makes many animations for hololive production to make the music video for us. Since Gura and I are good friends who can just have a good time and be very silly together, we made up an alternate universe where we are both gang leaders and fighting against each other. When I wrote the lyrics, I tried to think





about similar struggles that Gura and I face together as hololive English idols. There are very strong lyrics that say... sort of... there're two strong ladies fighting against the world. Sometimes there're people watching us who are not so nice to us. So, it's sort of a song where maybe if you watch the music video, you think it's me vs. Gura, but instead, it's more like us defending ourselves from some of the nasty people who comment negative things about us.

RSJ It seems like you are fighting each other, but you aren't. You two guys are teaming up against a huge enemy.

Calliope Yeah, exactly! The viewers expect so much from us. They expect us to be perfect all the time, but we don't want to be like that. We are just humans! It must be the hidden meaning of that song, I think.

RSJ You also stream gameplays and English classes which are also interesting. What do you keep in mind when you stream anything other than music?

Calliope I want to be entertaining! I want to capture people's attention and make them happy outside of their everyday life. Because everyday life is so tiring and working every day makes you very very tired. A long time ago, I also worked from morning to night at jobs, and it made me very very tired,

and I think about that time when I stream. Because I'd love to come home and be entertained after work. When I watched anime, other streamers playing games, and YouTube videos, I could relax from the real world. So now, I can provide that kind of entertainment to people who are coming from work and who want to relax and watch something fun to forget about sad things in the real world in day-to-day life.

RSJ You are the first artist from hololive English to make a major record label debut from EMI Records - Universal Music. Congratulations! How did you feel about that?

Calliope Thank you! I am extremely happy because this is something that I dreamed about. I was worried at first about whether the decision was right. I asked many questions, got many answers, and realized this was the best path for me. I'm extremely excited. And now what I want to see is other members of hololive production achieve their dreams. I want them to also have big goals come true. They have their own dreams, and some of them have already completed them. I think that's something really wonderful about hololive production. If I can help them, I would like to try.

RSJ How will your first EP from the major label, SHINIGAMI NOTE, be?

Calliope SHINIGAMI NOTE is my attempt to break into the mainstream music scene and the mainstream music style, but with lyrics that have the Mori Calliope flavor. A lot of mainstream music lyrics are pretty simple, and that's okay. But now I want to try combining interesting and thoughtful lyrics with mainstream tracks and putting my own style into that type of music

RSJ What is the concept of your 1st solo concert at Toyosu PIT on July 21, 2022?

Calliope It's called "New Underworld Order." Because the word underworld is included' in a much darker theme, and this time, instead of idol-themed with a very bright and sort of pop idol kawaii feeling. I wanted to try to do an underground rap-themed, dark, and sort of edgy feeling concert that feels closer to my roots. It's much more rap and hip hop and dark-themed than many other concerts that I think hololive production has done, so I'm really looking forward to it.

RSJ Tell us your enthusiasm or resolutions for the live show with crowds.

Calliope I want the crowds to really feel that I'm standing right in front of them. I want them to be able to connect with me even if they don't understand my lyrics, and to give me their enthusiasm and passion.

Right now, I'm building a lot of stamina so that I can perform my best for everyone.

RSJ What do you want to commit yourself to from now on? Or what are your dreams or plans?

Calliope From now on, I want to focus on making music. I love streaming, but it is what I do more for fun. And I want to put all of my focus into becoming a great musician. Someday, I'd really love to make music for video games, movies, or TV shows. That's my dream. **RS**

(Interview Date: May 17th, 2022)



『SHINIGAMI NOTE』

Mori Calliope

2022.07.20 Release

Mori Calliope

The Grim Reaper's first apprentice. Due to modern medical care causing a decline in the reaping business, Calliope decided to become a VTuber to harvest souls instead. It seems that the ascended souls of the people who are vaporized by the wholesome interactions between VTubers go to her as well.

That being said, despite the image her hardcore vocals and manner of speech gives off, she's actually a gentle-hearted girl who cares greatly for her friends.





NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

T-SHIRT



NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

MOTIF KEYCHAIN





NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

TAPESTRY

NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

BUTTON BADGE SET



NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

ACRYLIC LIGHT



Lights on

NEW UNDERWORLD ORDER

TOWEL WITH PVC POUCH



MERCH

The concert merch is available at
hololive production OFFICIAL SHOP and Geek Jack

2022. 6.15 2:00 PM - 7.5 11:59 PM (JST)

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